

Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development**Grants to Municipalities (AS 37.05.315)****Grant Recipient: Matanuska-Susitna Borough****Project Title:**

Matanuska-Susitna Borough - Site Selection, Planning, Design and Construction of Safe Shooting Ranges

State Funding Requested: \$ 340,000**House District: Mat-Su Areawide (13-16)**

One-Time Need

Brief Project Description:

Design and construct a new and safe shooting range in a rapidly growing area.

Funding Plan:**Total Cost of Project: \$340,000**Funding Secured*Amount FY*Other Pending Requests*Amount FY*Anticipated Future Need*Amount FY*

There is no other funding needed

Detailed Project Description and Justification:

Design and construct a new safe shooting range in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley. Demand for shooting areas in the Mat-Su is large and growing with the population. The Mat-Su Borough selected safe locations for shooting ranges, and this funding would begin design and construction of these much-needed facilities.

The Valley has become a destination for shooters of all kinds - some to practice target-shooting in a non-residential area, but also, for many to party, vandalize, and shoot randomly at all hours. With increased law enforcement present in the Valley, those who want to shoot need a safe environment where they can practice without potential harm to others.

This project was included in SB256 supplemental bill as part of the fy08 vetoed projects and was moved to the capital bill.

Project Timeline:

FY09-FY10

Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:

Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Grant Recipient Contact Information:

Contact Name: John Duffy, Borough Manager
Phone Number: 907-745-9689
Address: 350 E Dahlia Ave Palmer AK 99645
Email: jduffy@matsugov.us

Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Sponsor: J. Simpson and J. Colver
Adopted: 06/21/05

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. 05-083**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY CREATING
A PROCESS TO IDENTIFY SAFE SHOOTING SITES ON BOROUGH AND STATE
LAND IN VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH.

WHEREAS, there is a need for a safe, accessible locations
in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough for residents to undertake the
recreational target practice of firearms and to receive hunter
safety education; and

WHEREAS, public areas should be established which are safe,
with set hours of operation and allowed uses; and

WHEREAS, the members of the public have requested that the
Borough work with the State to establish locations for the safe
discharge of firearms; and

WHEREAS, the Borough and the State own thousands of acres
of land throughout the Borough which are suitable for a variety
of recreational activities, including the safe discharge of
firearms in a controlled situation; and

WHEREAS, there is a need to have at least one shooting
range and related facilities located in the borough that can be
used for hunter and firearm safety education courses; and

WHEREAS, a public process is established for public comment
on land use designations and classifications on both Borough and
State land; and

WHEREAS, the Assembly has previously approved a less than fair market value sale of a shooting range in the Montana Creek area to the Upper Susitna Shooters Association that serves the residents of the Upper Susitna area; and

WHEREAS, shooting facilities are also needed in the areas of Point MacKenzie, Willow to Meadow Lakes, Butte to Lazy Mountain (upper Knik River drainage), and in the general vicinity of the Palmer Hay Flats; and

WHEREAS, all of these areas are currently routinely used by residents and non-residents for recreational shooting; and

WHEREAS, in many cases, this shooting occurs close to private residences, other developed facilities, and heavily used recreational areas, which causes a safety concern; and

WHEREAS, areas on Borough and State lands that are readily accessible and that provide a safe, affordable, and enjoyable shooting experience need to be identified, set aside, and developed.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly directs the Borough Administration to work with representatives from the State's Department of Natural Resources and Department of Fish and Game, the general public, and members of the shooting sports community to identify suitable sites for shooting ranges in the areas of Point MacKenzie, Willow to Meadow Lakes, Butte to Lazy Mountain (upper Knik River

drainage), and in the general vicinity of the Palmer Hay Flats;
and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that at least one of these sites in the Borough should be suitable for designation as a location for Alaska State Department of Fish and Game hunter education classes and firearms safety certification; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that at least two sites from among the four general locations should be identified and made available for full public review and that the State and Borough public notice processes should run concurrently; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Borough and State representatives should also work and cooperate with local organizations interested in shooting sports and hunter safety to investigate the possibility for the transfer of management and operation of these sites once they are designated or classified; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Borough and State site recommendations, land designations, and classification processes should be ready for public review by May 15, 2006.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly this 21
day of June, 2005.

TIMOTHY L. ANDERSON, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:

MICHELLE M. MCGEHEE, CMC, Borough Clerk

(SEAL)

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: Woods, Colberg, Kvalheim, Simpson, Colver,
and Vehrs

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 12, 2005

TO: Members of the Assembly
Timothy L. Anderson, Borough Mayor
Staff

FROM: Jody Simpson

SUBJECT: **Resolution 05- 083**
Shooting Ranges in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough

On June 7, 2005, the Assembly passed Resolution Serial No. 05-077, which directed the Administration to present two alternative Borough-owned sites in the Point MacKenzie area for the establishment of a shooting range.

After reading Resolution 05-077 and related correspondence from Eddie Grasser, Alaska's National Rifle Association Field Representative, I decided we should take a more comprehensive approach to shooting ranges than what is currently proposed for the Point MacKenzie area.

As Mr. Grasser correctly points out in his June 1, 2005, e-mail to Assemblymember Colver, which is attached for your reference, what we really need are shooting ranges that are affordable, close to the population base, and easily accessible year-round. Without these, the informal shooting that is so prevalent today in our populated and heavily used areas will only continue. This random shooting has become an increasingly serious safety and property damage issue and needs to be addressed on a comprehensive level.

Therefore, the attached resolution proposes broadening the shooting range search process that was established in Resolution 05-077 to include Borough and State lands not just in Point MacKenzie, but also in the areas of Willow to Meadow Lakes, from Butte to Lazy Mountain, throughout the Knik River drainage area, and in the vicinity of the Palmer Hay Flats. Establishing facilities in one or more of these areas would complement the range that the Upper Susitna Shooters Association is operating on formerly Borough-owned land at Montana Creek.

I believe it is imperative that we expand the search process to include State-owned land because of the vast amount of acreage the State owns and manages within our borough boundaries. You will recall that the Assembly recently passed Resolution No. 05-068 in support of a public use area designation and a planning process for over 250,000 acres in the Knik River Watershed. This area, which includes Jim and Swan lakes, is notorious for a variety of activities, including the random discharge of firearms. This activity now happens at all hours of the day and night and often occurs in areas close to existing residences or in areas popular for other recreational activities. Most of that activity occurs on state-owned, not borough-owned, land. Additionally, the state also has a number of legislatively designated areas that were created to encourage lawful hunting activities, including the Goose Bay and Palmer Hay Flats state game refuges and the Matanuska Valley Moose Range. A portion of the Nelchina Public Use Area also lies within our boundaries. Because these uses are already designated by the

Im 05-157
RS 05-083

Legislature for these areas, I recommend we involve representatives of the state departments of Natural Resources and Fish and Game in our search process.

I also concur with Mr. Grasser's recommendation that the search committee include representatives from user groups that are interested in the shooting sports, such as the NRA, the Outdoor Council, and the Mat Valley Sportsmen. These representatives would work with State and Borough staff and members of the public to identify potential range locations and to determine how the facilities should be developed and managed.

I further recommend that at least one of the sites be developed to a level that can accommodate Hunter Safety and Firearms Safety classes, firearms testing, and firearms certification. It is my understanding that, currently, there exists no legal place close to our core population base where one can go to sight in a high-powered hunting rifle. The closest facilities at this time are Birchwood or Potter Marsh. However, it has been common knowledge that the Department of Fish and Game has sought an alternative to its Potter Marsh facility, which is receiving increased complaints from local residents because of its location.

The Borough and State could and should be involved in finding and building shooting facilities — possibly through a recreation bond that could include other recreational activities. However, once completed, I recommend that these facilities be turned over to a non-profit or some other group to manage and operate, similar to what is being contemplated for the Hatcher Pass project. The Borough is not equipped for such management activities and should not, in my opinion, be in the business of operating these shooting facilities.

With our growing population and increased usage by visitors and non-borough residents, planning for and identifying safe, easily accessible, and affordable areas for people to use firearms is an important issue that needs to be addressed proactively. I am pleased that the Assembly took a first step in identifying lands for shooting ranges by passing Resolution 05-77. However, I hope you will join me in taking a more comprehensive look at current and future needs for shooting facilities, and I respectfully request your support for Resolution 05-083.

Im 05-157
OR 05-083

Jody Simpson

From: "Eddie Grasser" <mtman@alaska.net>
To: <surveyor@pobox.alaska.net>
Cc: <aklynnne@gci.net>; <sallen@mtaonline.net>; <talissappleorchard@hotmail.com>; <marykv@mtaonline.net>; <jesimpson@gci.net>; <bvehrs@gci.net>
Sent: Wednesday, June 01, 2005 7:52 AM
Subject: shooting range

Dear Assemblyman Colver,

On behalf of my membership we would like to thank you for taking in the first step in recognizing the need for formal places to shoot here in the Mat-Su. We have a very large membership here in Alaska, and especially here in the Mat-Su. The need for a shooting range has been evident for years, especially one that is reasonably accessible to the general public.

Since it has been our impression in the past that the Borough was not overly supportive of a shooting range, we were in the initial stages of mounting a campaign to look at potential sites that were: 1) readily accessible, and 2) were on state land. Although some may see Point McKenzie as a good place to locate a range, it doesn't in our view meet the criteria for our immediate needs in the core area as it does not present itself as being in compliance with our first point, that being it needs to be readily accessible. For most of us in the core area, both Birchwood Shooting Park and Grouse Ridge would remain a more viable destination than a remote area in Point McKenzie. This is also true for the land the Borough set aside for the Upper Susitna Shooters, it is quite frankly too far from our core population.

We would of course support your action to set aside Borough lands in the Point McKenzie area for a shooting range, as that area will continue to grow and now is the proper time to identify lands for that use. As I have traveled throughout Alaska these past four years as Alaska's representative for the National Rifle Association, it has become clear to me that shooting ranges should be a high priority for many communities. The truth is Alaskans are still highly active in the shooting sports and providing a formal place to shoot would greatly assist in curtailing, or eliminating informal shooting activities such as we are seeing in many areas of the Mat-Su.

We would like to suggest rewording your resolution so that a panel of interested parties could be put together to identify likely areas, both in the outlying districts such as Point McKenzie, as well as closer to the current population centers for appropriate range development. I present this option as we are currently in the process of working with state officials to identify lands within the core area to set up a

shooting park. It is our position that there is a great need for such a facility close to where people can spend some time after work without having to drive several hours to do so. Although we recognize the Borough should have a place at the table in this process, we don't feel they should have veto authority over our efforts. As with our successful effort to eliminate local control over a constitutional right related to the possession and use of firearms (HB 184) which was lobbied against heavily by the Alaska Municipal League, we believe we have the political capital to effectively pursue a strategy on state lands close to the core area.

In any event, we look forward to your efforts to set aside some lands for a shooting facility be they at Point McKenzie or somewhere else. We would also hope that you will support our efforts to locate such a facility closer to our population centers.

Sincerely,

Eddie Grasser
NRA Field Representative

6/6/2005

STATE OF ALASKA

Frank H Murkowski, Governor

Matanuska Valley Fish & Game Advisory Committee

Wayne Kubat, Chair
PO Box 874867
Wasilla, Alaska 99687
ph. & fax: 376-9568
email: args@mtaonline.net

June 20th, 2005

Dear Mayor Anderson and Mat-Su Borough Assembly Members,

The Matanuska Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee deals closely with fish and wildlife issues in South Central Alaska as well as statewide. We send representatives to most, if not all regional and state Board of Game (BOG) and Board of Fish meetings, and currently have members participating with the Mat-Su Borough in the Big Lake Water Shed Project. We usually meet twice per month from October through April, and meet at various locations in the Wasilla – Palmer area. Information on the location and dates of our meetings are usually published in the sports section of the Sunday Frontiersman, and in the outdoor Section of the Sunday Anchorage Daily News. We welcome and encourage public participation.

Our 15 committee members and two alternates, provide a wide cross section of differing interests, but most, if not all of us, do fish and/or hunt and/or trap in various degrees from “professionally” and “very often” down to “sometimes” and “use to”.

Our committee feels that a lack of safe shooting areas are a concern in the Mat-Su borough, and whole heartedly support and endorse Resolution No. 05-083. A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY CREATING A PROCESS TO IDENTIFY SAFE SHOOTING SITES ON BOROUGH AND STATE LAND IN VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH. We would urge you to adopt this resolution.

Sincerely,

Wayne Kubat

Chairman-Matanuska Fish and Game Advisory Committee

From Rod Arno <arno@mtaonline.net>
Sent Monday, June 20, 2005 9:01 am
To jesimpson@gci.net
Cc Wayne Kubat <args@mtaonline.net>
Subject Shooting Ranges

Jody Simpson,

The Alaska Outdoor Council's (AOC) board has taken action in support of your Shooting Ranges resolution 05-083. I won't be able to attend tomorrow's Assembly Meeting; I'm leaving tonight for meetings in Fairbanks. I have e-mailed Assembly members Lynne Woods and Bill Allen informing them of AOC's support. I have also sent a copy of your Resolution to Wayne Kubat, Chairmen of the Mat. Valley Fish & Game Advisory Committee. Hopefully he will get an e-mail of support back to you before tomorrow's meeting. As time allows me today I will try to get e-mails to other Assembly members.

Thank you for your work on this important issue, AOC has been trying for years to get the department of Fish & Game to start a shooting range project in the Mat. Valley. Rod Arno (ED for AOC) phone 376-2913, cell 841-6849

Jody Simpson

Shooting Range

From: "Mat-Su Birders" <msbirder@pobox.mtaonline.net>
To: "Steve Cypra" <Steve.Cypra@matsugov.us>
Cc: "Jody SIMPSON" <jesimpson@gci.net>
Sent: Wednesday, June 07, 2006 3:55 PM
Subject: LOCATION OF SHOOTING RANGES IN SOUTHCENTRAL MAT-SU

Dear Steve,

I'm writing to you in my capacity as President of the Mat-Su Birders, a wild bird club that meets monthly in Palmer. Although our club's primary purpose is birding, our membership is diverse and many of our members hunt and several are also members of the National Rifle Association.

We strongly support the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly Resolution 05-083, sponsored by former Assembly Member Jody Simpson and Assembly Member Jim Colver, to identify safe shooting sites on Borough and State land in the Mat-Su Borough. That Resolution was recently highlighted in an opinion piece by Jody Simpson, published in both the *Frontiersman* and in the *Anchorage Daily News*.

Although our club does not normally involve itself in environmental issues, our members want to make sure that the Mat-Su Birders position on the location of a shooting range(s) in the Valley is given equal weight with that of other user groups of the Palmer Hay Flats and Mud/Jim/Swan Lakes areas.

The Mat-Su Birders wild bird club was formed fairly recently, in the spring of 1999, but organized birding in south central Mat-Su has been going on since the 1950's, and official species sighting records for the Mat-Su go back to the early 1960's. We bird all over south central Mat-Su, and the areas that are birded most heavily are the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge at the Hayfield Road access point, the area in and around Reflections Lake (formally known as "Rambo Lake") off of the Glenn Highway at the Knik River Bridge, the old Matanuska town site, and the Maud Road and Mud/Jim/Swan Lakes areas of the Knik River watershed area in the Knik River Valley. These birding locations are promoted nationally in George C. West's book, *A BIRDER'S GUIDE TO ALASKA*, published in 2002 by the American Birding Association, which is the primary birding reference for birders coming to Alaska. Many of our members currently participate with other user groups in annual efforts to clean up the messes left in those areas.

A shooting range sited at or near the Hayfield Road access to the Hay Flats, at or near Reflections Lake, or in the areas near or adjacent to the Maud Road and Mud/Jim/Swan Lakes locations, would definitely have negative effects on birding in those areas. Birding is a process that involves both seeing birds and hearing the calls and songs of bird species. For some bird species, hearing the bird is necessary to make a positive identification. The concentrated noise of gunfire coming from a nearby range, especially the noise from semiautomatic or fully automatic firearms (if allowed), would make birding in those locations next to impossible.

Discussion amongst the shooters in our group raised the possibility of placing a range in the Palmer Hay Flats at the end of Rabbit Slough Road. That location is already heavily used by hunters field training their dogs. If necessary, Rabbit Slough Road could be extended, if a shooting range needed to be located farther out on the Hay Flats. With the recent reconfiguration of the Glenn/Parks Highways interchange, Rabbit Slough Road is now only accessible via Fireweed Road at the Trunk Road Exit on the Parks Highway. Given its location at the end of a road, the Rabbit Slough Road site offers the opportunity for controlling the road access to a shooting range, if that option was deemed necessary. ✓

We feel that the Mat-Su Birders can make a positive contribution to the challenge of selecting sites for new shooting ranges in the Valley and we request that the our group be added to the list of those organizations to be consulted on this issue. We also ask that we be added to the mailing list of organizations receiving announcements about the shooting range location issue.

Mail can be sent to the Mat-Su Birders at P.O. Box 877378, Wasilla AK 99687 and we can be reached by email at <msbirder@pobox.mtaonline.net> or by telephone at 376-8594.

A hard copy of this letter is being sent to you mailing address at the Borough.

Sincerely,

Bob Winckler
Mat-Su Birders

6/7/2006

Borough fires off new shooting range ideas

DARRELL L. BREESE

Frontiersman reporter

PALMER — Mat Su Borough Assembly member Jody Simpson, who's being forced out of office by term limits come October, is going out with a bang.

Simpson wrote a resolution that begins the process within the borough to identify safe shooting sites on borough and/or state-owned lands. The need for a shooting range was brought to my attention when I started on this body six years ago," Simpson said. I had kept putting it off because I was a hunter, but having a safe place to shoot really bothered me. I deferred it to the borough assembly, especially in the second year. The resolution passed unanimously. Part of the assembly's constant agenda is making things second order, so the need for a shooting range had been addressed.

Fellow assembly member Jim Colver also recognized the need for a safe place to shoot when he introduced and gained the approval of the assembly for a similar resolution during the June 7

meeting. Colver's resolution limited the search for a range to the Point MacKenzie area.

"I knew something needed to be done to address the lack of a shooting range in the borough when I visited a gravel pit near the Palmer Hay Flats," Simpson said.

There were "No Shooting" signs that were riddled with holes and old televisions, computers and washing machines that had been used for target practice.

The random shooting has become an increasingly serious safety issue and the property damage has increased as well.

said. "Without safe shooting areas, this type of informal shooting that is so prevalent today in the populated and heavily used areas will only continue. And someone is going to get hurt."

"This random shooting has become an increasingly serious safety issue and the property damage has increased as well," Simpson continued. "It is a topic that needs to be addressed on a comprehensive level."

Eddie Grasser, NRA field representative for Alaska, echoed Simpson's call for local shooting areas.

"We recognize that shooting is not a high priority for some people," Grasser said. "But many Alaskans are still highly active in shooting sports, and providing a formal place to shoot would greatly assist in curtailing or eliminating informal shooting activities such as those taking place in many areas of the borough."

Simpson also pointed out that a range in the core area would provide a facility that could offer hunter safety courses to local residents.

Colver said it might appear that assembly members are trying to outgun each other with both resolutions, but stressed that is not the case.

"The Point MacKenzie site is a range that can be developed in a shorter time frame," Colver said. "And the other measure is more of a long-term development process."

"I hope it is clear that we are not trying to outgun each other. The body is unanimously for both resolutions, which show we recognize the benefits of moving forward with both reviews and development."

Simpson calls for the identification of suitable sites for a shooting range in three areas of the borough: in addition to the Point MacKenzie area, she would like to see ranges in the area from Meadow Lake to Willow, and to Lay Mountain and the Palmer Hay Flats.

Establishing facilities in one or more of these areas would complement the Point MacKenzie range proposed by Jim (Colver) and the range operated by the Upper Susitna Shooters Association on former borough land at Montana Creek.

The lack of an official shooting range has prompted individuals to convert vacant lots, river banks and camping and recreation areas into makeshift target-practice areas.

"I think everyone has seen the abandoned cars pulled out of the Knik River area full of bullet holes," Simpson

Frontiersman

6/25/06

Borough shooting range plans under fire

DARRELL L. BREESE

Frontiersman reporter

PALMER — As the Mat-Su Borough Assembly prepares to consider three possible sites for a borough-owned shooting range, Susan Lindquist and her family have become more concerned.

Gun owners in the Valley have earned a bad reputation because of people who shoot at road signs and in makeshift target ranges. In an attempt to provide gun enthusiasts with a

designated safe place to shoot, the assembly unanimously adopted a pair of resolutions calling for the identification of potential sites for a public shooting range.

Borough officials determined that two sites on borough-owned land in the Point MacKenzie area (one near the intersection of Point MacKenzie and Alsop Road and the other a mile north of

District 5 candidates weigh in on issue.

Page Ax

the Jewel Lake site, and have been using it for recreation as they develop plans to build a permanent home on the property. The thought of having an unsupervised rifle range next door scares her.

South Burma Road northwest of Jewel Lake were suitable for a shooting range. During its regular meeting Tuesday, the assembly will declare one of the three sites a shooting area. The selection of those sites has drawn the ire of Lindquist and several other neighbors. Lindquist and her family bought property adjacent to

the Jewel Lake site, and have been using it for recreation as they develop plans to build a permanent home on the property. The thought of having an unsupervised rifle range next door scares her.

"We'd be within the range of a stray bullet," Lindquist said of the proximity of the planned shooting area to her property. "We spend a lot of time there with our children and plan to raise horses when

See SHOOT, Page A11

"Having an unsupervised shooting range for a neighbor puts my family at risk for injury or death."

— Susan Lindquist, Point MacKenzie property owner

Shoot

Continued from Page A1

we make it our primary residence. Having an unsupervised shooting range for a neighbor puts my family at risk for injury or death."

She added that family members hunt, and she's not opposed to guns. But Lindquist doesn't believe the shooting facility proposed by the borough is appropriate for that area.

"I think the site chosen will have a great impact on wildlife and public safety," Lindquist said.

Steve Rowland, a supporter of developing a shooting range in the Palmer-Wasilla area, questions the feasibility of the sites.

"I applaud the effort to finally locate a site for a shooting range within the populated area of the borough, it's long overdue," Rowland said. "However, the

current proposal to locate the range in the Point MacKenzie area fails to provide the type of accessible facility that is needed."

Rowland went on to state that the location of the Birchwood Shooting Range in Chugach, 30 minutes away, is still closer than the one-hour drive it will take to get to Point MacKenzie.

"The planned sites would not provide a service that will be used by local shooters," Rowland said. "They're just too far away."

The sites might be used by shooters who live in the Knik-Goose Bay area, but you're still going to see the

guy wanting to sight in his rifle before a hunting trip going to the end of the road or the abandoned gravel pit."

Others question the expense needed to develop the sites, since two of the locations would need new roads and that would lead to increased maintenance costs. A portion of the Iditarod

"The planned sites would not provide a service that will be used by local shooters," Rowland said. "They're just too far away."

— Steve Rowland, shooting range advocate

National Historic Trail lies in the middle of one of the proposed Point MacKenzie parcels and is the site favored by the parks, recreation and trails advisory board. The Knik 200 sled dog race crosses privately owned land adjacent to the other Point MacKenzie site, which is located near the Alsop Road-Point MacKenzie Road intersection.

All three sites received more negative than supportive comments during the public-comment period, but the site being considered — the one crossed by the Iditarod National Historic Trail — had no specific negative comments. The planning commission refused to recommend a site based on

the public input and questions regarding who would be responsible for the management of the site, if approved.

The parks, recreation and trails advisory board agreed, and together with the planning commission forwarded for consideration the site that received the least number of negative comments.

A public hearing will be held today during the assembly's regular meeting at 7 p.m. regarding the selection of a site and reclassification of the land to allow for a shooting range to be developed.

Contact Darrell L. Breese at 352-2267 or at darrell.breese@frontiersman.com.

Susan Lindquist
10-20-05

Valley needs a shooting range

My big-game hunting focus this fall has been archery oriented. I've already been up the Dalton Highway for caribou and my Dall sheep hunt is coming in early October. I have a 40-yard archery range in my yard and have been practicing regularly. A friend in Big Lake called a couple of weeks ago asking if the moose season was open and hinted that a "backyard" moose hunt was a real possibility.

His phone call was more of a bull-moose on his property. It reminded me that I had neglected to sight in my hunting rifle this season. I set out the next day to correct my oversight.

I drove to a so-called unofficial shooting area on state land in the Big Lake area. I found a large motor home with an A/V trailer attached to it. About five feet from the spot where I normally set up my shooting bench, the trailer back in the motor home ducked out of sight. When I pulled up it was sure the guys were hunting in the area. Much for that fool.

I drove to site No. 2, a large tract of private property on the other side of Big Lake where I had permission to shoot. I had only been there a couple of times before and for a year or so. As I drove along the back road leading to the site, I was surprised at all the houses and development since I visited last. This area also would not provide a safe place to shoot.

I remembered another location where I had hunted moose several years ago that was literally at the end of a road going yet a third direction out of Big Lake. Given my luck so far, I wasn't holding my breath, but I headed that way. After driving for an hour and a half around Big Lake, I was finally able to check my rifle sights at 50 yards, the longest distance at which I could maintain a safe backstop for the bullets.

In my 12 years in Big Lake, I have seen one



Howard Delo

Outdoors

gravel pit shooting area literally leveled, and a house with a dog lot built on the site. Vandals with guns have caused the loss of access to BLM property near the Knik River, and we have all seen shot-up road signs.

While an established shooting range in the Valley would not stop the vandals, it would benefit those who enjoy the safe and legal exercise of their shooting interests. There has been talk

over the years about the Palmer sportsman's club developing an outdoor rifle range. A couple of years ago there was an effort near Houston to establish a range. I understand a group in Talkeetna is also trying to develop a range near there. But so far, no developed public outdoor shooting range capable of handling high-powered rifles exists in the Valley.

ADP's Wildlife Conservation Division receive federal funding every year that can be earmarked to build shooting ranges. Those funds built Rabbit Creek Range in south Anchorage and helped construct the indoor range in Palmer several years ago. The department recently built a shooting facility in Fairbanks and is presently constructing a facility near Juneau.

The Valley is the fastest growing area of the state. I think it's time a properly engineered shooting range is constructed here to provide a safe and legal place to shoot. With the proper facilities, hunter education and personal defense classes and shooting clinics of all types could be accommodated. If you are interested in having a permanent place to shoot available without having to drive to Birchwood or south Anchorage, contact Fish and Game and your state legislators and lobby for the funding necessary to construct a public shooting facility in the Valley.

Howard Delo is a retired fisheries biologist living in Big Lake.



Official Business

Alaska State Legislature

SENATE

MEMORANDUM

February 18, 2007

State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

To: Sen. Bert Stedman, Co-Chair, Senate Finance Committee

From: Sen. Joe Thomas

Sen. Kim Elton

Sen. Charlie Huggins

Sen. Donny Olson

Re: Statewide Shooting Ranges

We respectfully request you consider including in the capital budget a statewide package of shooting range investments. These projects range from completing partially finished state-owned hunter education facilities to rebuilding a shooting range destroyed by fire and selecting sites for new, safe ranges in rapidly growing areas.

Before it burned down, the Tanana Valley Sportsmen's Association facility was home to Fairbanks area youth shooting teams, among others. The association's insurance policy will not cover the full costs of rebuilding.

4/08-
C. Huggins
Staff

Demand for shooting areas in the Matanuska-Susitna valley is large and growing with the population. ~~The borough selected safe locations for shooting ranges, and this funding would begin design and construction of these much-needed facilities.~~ ** No site selection or planning has occurred to date. These funds would provide for site selection, planning, design & construction.* The Juneau Hunter Education Facility is half finished. Finishing the floor, adding archery lanes and a classroom will complete the facility and bring vastly more users in the door without added staff, reducing the annual general fund needed.

The shooting range owned by the City of Nome, like the Ketchikan Rod & Gun Club, is in need improvements to promote safety and public use.

Indoor restrooms and berm improvements at the Rabbit Creek Range in Anchorage are included as part of a governor's capital budget request, so we do not include them here.

The attached pages provide you two options for including the package in the capital budget: either as individual projects or a single, cohesive language item. We appreciate your consideration of this statewide package.

AMENDMENT

Offered by: Representative Stoltze
To: HSC CSSB 221 (FIN), Draft Version "N"

Page 25, line 6:

Insert before the word "Design"
"Site Selection, Planning,"

Explanation: When the other body added this appropriation, it was thought that a site of land had been purchased to house this shooting range project. In discussions with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, no site selection or planning has occurred to date. By adding the additional language, this would allow the Mat-Su Borough to utilize the appropriation for these additional purposes.